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The Masterkey

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LAYING THE CORNERSTONE OF OUR NEW LIBRARY

President C. Allan Braun is shown using the same trowel used for the cornerstone of the Southwest Museum in 1913 in laying the cornerstone on March 16, 1977 for the new Research Library he has made possible. At Mr. Braun's left is Don Grossman, construction supervisor. Standing are Mrs. Braun and Dr. Carl S. Dentzel, the Museum's director. (See Page 44) (Vanguard photograph).

present La Paz-San José del Cabo highway at kilometer 71.

19. Santiago: AIÑINÍ (RRL).

Clearly the data presented here show that much remains to be researched relative to indigenous place names in Baja California Sur. If the Indian names of such places as San Antonio, El Triunfo, Miraflores, Todos Santos, and others are as yet unknown, it may well be that they will appear in some of the documents which are yet to be studied.

To keep alive the indigenous place names along with those of the colonial and modern periods is to maintain a deep awareness of cultural roots. Fortunately, when the foregoing work was presented in the Twelfth Annual Symposium of the Asociación Cultural de las Californias, held in La Paz on April 27 and 28, 1974, it was unanimously decided to propose to the appropriate authorities that, officially, the indigenous place names be added to the present place names of locales in Baja California Sur.

Footnotes: Appendix

- (1) See: Jaime Bravo, Juan de Ugarte, and Clemente Guillén, *Testimonios Sudcalifornianos, Nueva entrada y establecimiento en el puerto de La Paz, 1720*, edited by Miguel León-Portilla (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma, 1969), pp. 83-112.
- (2) See the compilation of reports and letters in: Constantino Bayle, ed., *Misión de la Baja California* (Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1946). Father Tamaral's place names appear on pages 213-214.

The End

LAND CONVEYANCE AGREEMENT

Secretary of the Interior Thomas S. Kleppe and officers of the Alaska Native Regional Corporation, Koniag, Inc., have recently signed an agreement which will facilitate the conveyance of more than one million acres of land to the Corporation and its associated village corporations under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The agreement provides the mechanism for processing land selections in the Koniag region and effecting conveyance of the land despite litigation pending in court.

Secretary Kleppe said that he expects this agreement to serve as a pattern for similar agreements with other Alaska regional corporations.



The Helek at sea. Photograph by Paul D. Becker.

AT SEA WITH THE HELEK*

By TRAVIS HUDSON

Introduction

The sea: earth's final frontier—
These are the voyages of the plank canoe *Helek*.
Its Bicentennial mission:
To explore the northern Channel Islands—
To seek out knowledge of ancient peoples and places—
And to boldly go where Chumash seamen went before.

*I should like to thank the following organizations for granting permits for the *Helek's* channel island voyage: U.S. Navy and Channel Islands National Monument (San Miguel Island), Vails-Vickers Ranch (Santa Rosa Island), University of California Channel Islands Field Station, and the Santa Cruz Island Cattle Company (Santa Cruz Island). Also my deepest appreciation to my friends who made the voyage possible—Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Brooks, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Howorth, Mr. Rick Terry, and, of course, the Quabajai Chumash.

Captain's Log: 26 June, 1976

The eleventh voyage of the *Helek* is about to begin. In the midst of Santa Barbara's celebration of the sea, *Semana Nautica*, a crowd of spectators has gathered on the beach to witness this, a most truly historical event, about to unfold.

Ten eager crewmen, members of Santa Barbara's Quabajai Chumash Indian Association and of Chumash descent, excitedly wait for the signal to launch the *Helek* through the pounding 4-foot surf. A Polynesian sailor gives a prayer from the beach in Hawaiian as the *Helek* enters the sea.

Once through the surf the *Helek* heads seaward a few miles before joining the support vessel, *Just Love*, a 57-foot converted fishing boat used for scientific research by Brooks Institute. Hoisted aboard, the *Helek* begins her 40-mile trip across the channel to distant Cuyler Harbor, San Miguel Island. From this tiny Island the *Helek* will begin her 9-day, 100-mile voyage, to return on her own to Santa Barbara. She will follow ancient Chumash canoe routes and visit forgotten ports once used by Chumash seamen two centuries before her.

The *Helek* was built for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. Twenty-six and one-half feet in length, she is accurate in every possible detail to the ancient *tomol*—the Chumash plank canoe. From over 3,000 pages of ethnographic notes on these boats, recorded by John P. Harrington, my research team compiled a complete description of the *tomol*, corroborated also by historical and archaeological data.

Constructed from local driftwood by Peter and Jane Howorth, her fifth voyage took place in Santa Barbara on February 22, 1976, as part of the official bicentennial reenactment of the De Anza Expedition. All of her ten voyages have substantiated the accuracy of her design and have provided a wealth of data on her seaworthiness. But now, as a joint project of the Museum and the Quabajai Chumash, we were about to demand the supreme effort of her—to sustain a long and daring sea voyage to provide us with important information on the *tomol*, and also contribute immensely to the self-respect of Santa Barbara's native people.

A few hours after our arrival at Cuyler Harbor darkness came, and with it a thousand stars. Resting on

the wet sand only yards from the sea, the *Helek* awaited her destiny which would come with the dawn. Beside her, the crew gathered.

Seacliffs silhouetted by pale moonlight and the glow of the Indians' tiny beach fire added to the island's enchantment—and their songs, accompanied by rattles and drum, brought a feeling of remote antiquity. In rhythms they expressed a mood within all of us—of anticipation, concern, and expectation, but also pride in what we were about to attempt.

Captain's Log: 27 June, 1976

Shouting from the beach awakens us aboard the *Just Love*; it is nearly 5 a.m., and the rays of the sun are still faint.

Our skiff heads for the beach to retrieve the six waiting Quabajai. The remaining four, in high spirits and eager for the voyage which awaits them, have already launched the *Helek* and are now well on their way to Santa Rosa Island. From the *Just Love* they appear as a tiny speck on the distant horizon.

A frantic chase begins. While we raise our anchor the skiff's motor hums as she tries to catch the disappearing canoe. To catch her is vital, for her course is taking her into treacherous waters—where powerful ocean swells and violent currents meet from all directions, breaking over shallow shoals.

Seconds pass into minutes as the chase continues. Finally we are relieved to see that the skiff has managed to reach the *Helek* in time. A course change is verbally passed to the *Helek's* captain to steer for a certain point at Santa Rose Island. We now try to relax with a cup of coffee to break the morning's chill; but the excitement is too intense.

My mind wanders back five centuries, and I feel somehow attached to the old canoe voyages between these islands. I sense, too, a strong wish that Harrington could witness what is happening, but more importantly that one very special man could see it—the one man who could take ultimate pride in these events—Fernando Librado *Kitsepawit*. From him Harrington had collected most of his canoe data; but it is Fernando who represents the Indian link between ancient and modern ways. How proud he would be to see this.

The Indians are spiritually moved, and they feel that something mystical is happening to them. They say the sea here is unusually calm, and the winds which frequently plague these waters are silent. Moreover, they do not feel alone in the canoe for they believe that they are guided by unseen hands. Strange things are happening, it is true. In the middle of San Miguel Passage a large pod of playful sea lions has appeared, intersecting the *Helek*. The animals swim around the canoe with porpoise-like acrobatics for 15 minutes. No one aboard has ever seen anything like it. The Quabajai shout between their rowing chants with cries of conquering the sea and meeting their past; and the sea lions jump all the higher. Could they be right? Is Fernando now watching and taking pride in them as we are? I wonder.

The *Helek* is now "flying aguja", a term used by Hispanicized Chumash *tomol* seamen to mean that the canoe is going as fast as a barracuda. And indeed she is—we clock her speed at between 7 and 8 knots as she rides the swells, dipping and rising with them. She is beautiful—no wonder her ancestors so impressed the Spaniards.

Hours have now passed and we are along Santa Rosa Island's rugged northern coast. A northeast wind meets the *Helek* head on, nearly bringing her to a standstill. Supreme effort is required of her four crewmen with their 10-foot paddles to move her even a few feet forward. "She blows at 10 knots from the Northeast", a verbal message sounds. "Move closer to shore and out of the wind's path."

For an hour she blows, and for an hour her crew struggles in vain. Then a grey whale passes quite close to the *Helek* and the wind begins to die. Another omen? The Indians think so.

An hour has passed since the wind died, and ever since the *Helek* has been "flying aguja." Elk, lined like sentries on the looming cliffs, peer down on the *Helek*. Another omen, I am told. And then, as the prow of the canoe aims directly at Becher's Bay, the final destination for the day, the ancient Chumash mariner's friend, the pelican, kites in the sky in the wake of the *Helek*. The bird's outspread wings glitter in the warm sun as it slowly dips and pitches, following close behind the

Helek's stern. The Quabajai crew shout: "Do you see this? I told you so, our ancestors are with us!"

Our landing is eventful, and my reward is a dunking in the sea by the joyful crew. I can honestly say that I have never seen a happier group of people—all dancing on the beach as the *Helek* rests from her long ordeal. The crew has gone through a marathon ordeal, too, for they have paddled 22 miles in a period of 8 hours, their 9-pound paddles taking thousands of strokes. Though muscles ache, knees bleed, and faces are sunburned, their spirits are high. Tonight they will sleep well.

Becher's Bay is notorious for its winds, yet there are none. We are amazed by the strangeness of the weather, but the Quabajai are not. They quickly tell us why the wind isn't blowing: "It is the same reason that the pelicans have started to swarm over the *Helek*—flying in circles—birds by the hundreds—and none feeding. What have you got to say to that!"

What could we say?

Captain's Log: 28 June, 1976

Seeking not to be caught unaware of the *Helek's* launching, we awake early. We weigh anchor and the *Just Love's* engine churns the sea gently.

At 5 a.m. excited yells strike our ears. We can see the *Helek* slice through gentle surf, heading toward Santa Cruz Island. Like the day before, the sea is calm and the whisper of a breeze is all that stirs the air.

An hour passes and the *Helek* is flying across the Santa Cruz Passage, the cadence of her paddle strokes uniform and smooth. Her beauty greets the sun's, their colors mixing and reflecting—reds and golds—upon the rippled sea. It is a spectacular sunrise scene to behold.

Two hours out, and still in the channel, a large freighter appears. To the Indians a collision appears likely, but to Howorth the large bow and stern wakes of the iron monster pose a greater danger. We watch, concerned, noting the strange contrast between old and new—one a fragile craft of driftwood and fibers; and the other, a thousand times larger, of hulking steel and rivets. It is as if two centuries have become one.

The passage is made safely. Rounding the southwest corner of Santa Cruz Island, the *Helek* heads east.

The wind picks up, but it poses fewer problems to the crew than the current, which pulls the *Helek* toward land against the force of the wind. A crewman asks why the canoe is being pulled toward that particular stretch of beach, for he believes that there must be something very powerful, or very sacred, there. I was to find later that the largest known archaeological site on the island was there.

Howorth, who built the *Helek*, suggests an interesting and testable idea about Chumash canoes of old—why not sail them? The wind is astern at 15 knots, so if the rowers place their paddles across the gunwales the blades should catch the wind and sail the canoe. We try it, and it works. We clock the *Helek* at speeds of between 3 and 4 knots.

The wind falters to 5 knots and the crew resumes paddling. Again the *Helek* is "flying aguja." A current is aiding, and the crewmen each speak of something supernatural lifting the bottom of the canoe and pushing the boat forward through the sea. They can feel its force. They are making great speed when they encounter a very large shark, which circles them ominously.

Seven hours out of Becher's Bay the luck changes. The crew clashes with a head-one current, their paddles clawing at the water endlessly, but little progress is made.

Hours drag on and the crew works beyond fatigue under the hot summer sun. The sea is unyielding. Though disappointed, the paddlers continue in sweat and physical and mental pain to reach the port ahead.

Two more grueling hours pass and at last the *Helek* reaches her destination, Coches Priostos, only to capsize in the surf and damage her hull planking. One crewman is very sick, and the others suffer excessive fatigue, collapsing on the sand. They have today traveled 18 miles.

They will rest a few days on the island before tackling the mainland crossing.

Captain's Log: 29 June to 4 July, 1976

For us, time is spent patching the *Helek's* damaged planks and enjoying the sea. The Indians, rested, explore the island.

During our stay the weather worsens. Storm-force winds churn up the channel waters, and small craft warnings are out. Our plans for a channel crossing must be scrapped, but each of us knows beyond the slightest doubt that the *Helek* and her crew could easily make that crossing in favorable weather.

The *Helek* did, however, return to Santa Barbara along the mainland coast, beginning at Ventura, and arriving on the Nation's bicentennial birthday. The scientific results of her remarkable voyages are soon to be published by Ballena Press, under the title *Tomol: the Ethnographic Notes on Chumash Watercraft by John P. Harrington*, while the supernatural events which took place are now legend among her Indian crew, who boldly went where Chumash seamen went before.

RESEARCH LIBRARY NOTES

The new Library building will bring scattered special collections together in one location. Plans are to lay out the second floor ideally for the care, development, and interpretation of the Museum's archival, manuscript, cartographic, photographic, and other unique resources. Glenna Schroeder, formerly a volunteer history intern, now a library assistant, and Ron Kinsey, photograph archivist, accompanied the Librarian on a March 21 visit to the Department of Special Collections at UCLA in connection with plans to provide better for the Museum's collections.

Dr. Floyd A. O'Neil, associate professor of the Western History Center, University of Utah, followed his January 11 visit with others to explore materials for the study of Navajo Indians with a gift of three fine publications in the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada's series: one is a Washo tribal history; the other two divide Paiute history into Southern and Northern Paiute histories. Cesar Corzo Espinosa kindly sent a copy of his *Toponimia Chiapaneca o Jardin de los Nombres Geográficos de Chiapas* (1976), a welcome addition to the Library's place-name literature.

Louise Foreman Maynard's honorarium from the California History and Landmarks Department of the Tuesday Afternoon Club of Glendale has already added titles which reflect these ladies' interests, including the first volume in The Santa Barbara Bicentennial Historical Series: *As the Padres Saw Them: California Indian Life and Customs as Reported by the Franciscan Missions, 1813-1815* (1976). An honorarium from the Seeders & Weeders Garden Club of San Marino in the name of Mrs. James A. Phillips III will be similarly used. The Los Angeles Corral of The Westerners honored their deceased member Homer H. Boelter with a generous memorial check for Library material.

(Continued on Page 72)